

Connecting Histories

Newsletter

Issue 1 - Summer 2005

Do you have a history that you want to tell?

Should other people know about it?

Would you like to know how to archive the history of your community or record people's memories?

Do you want to meet other people who are uncovering hidden histories?

We are looking for people who want to get involved.

What is *Connecting Histories*?

Connecting Histories is an innovative partnership project led by Birmingham City Archives, the Universities of Birmingham and Warwick and the *Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures* group.

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, we are:

- making documents and photographs available about the histories of diverse city communities
- supporting people from different communities to get involved in archiving their histories
- ensuring that these stories are told and used for learning by individuals, schools and colleges



Lunch break at Dudley & Dowell Foundry, Cradley Heath, © Paul Hill, 1972 [MS2294]



Derek Bishton checking camera in 'Handsworth Self Portrait' [MS2478]

How does it work?

The project will list the contents of archive collections and give information about the people and organizations that created them, making the collections better known and easier to use for research or community activities. The lists, with scanned images of documents and photographs, will be made available on the *Connecting Histories* website, which will go live in early 2006.

Collections to be catalogued include: the Indian Workers Association; the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation; Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre; Charles Parker Archive; Banner Theatre; Ten:8 and photographers Vanley Burke, George Hallett and Paul Hill.

What will be on the website?

- 5 learning packages
- photographic galleries and exhibitions
- lists of archive collections
- discussion board
- community events notice board
- information on how to plan, fund and do community history projects
- information on careers in archives and heritage
- and lots of other useful links and information



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What are the learning packages?

The online learning packages, aimed at adults, will develop your archive and historical research skills and introduce key themes in the city's history:

- how to research black history and heritage
- migration and settlement
- campaigning for social justice in Birmingham from the 18th century to the present day
- challenging racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in the city - past and present

What can you do?

You can take part in a range of activities to tell your history or the history of your community:

- making oral history recordings or video histories
- gathering information for a community archive
- producing exhibitions on hidden histories
- putting together applications for funding for your own community history projects
- cataloguing documents and photographs

Find out more about how you might benefit from getting involved - contact details below.



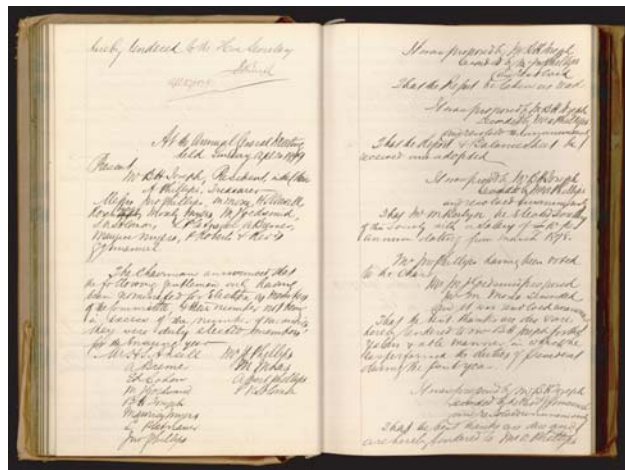
The project team (clockwise from top left): Dr Robert Carter - Academic Adviser, University of Warwick; Professor Ian Grosvenor - Academic Adviser, University of Birmingham; Brigitte Winsor - Digitisation Officer; Anna Riggs - Archivist; Jim Ranahan - Archivist; Arike Oke - Trainee Archivist; Aishling Fox - Trainee Archivist; Siân Roberts - Project Manager; Helen Fisher - Archivist; Izzy Mohammed - Community Access Officer.

Connecting Histories
Central Library - Floor 3
Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3HQ
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Our Collections

Future editions of this newsletter will feature each collection in more detail.

Birmingham Hebrew Congregation



Committee Minutes, Sunday 20 April 1899 [MS2430]

The records of the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation, which date from the 1820s, are a fascinating source of information about Jewish life in Birmingham: bar mitzvah, marriage, death, burial, food laws, the building of the magnificent Singer's Hill Synagogue, celebrations, festivals, sport and social events, welfare, education, and immigration.

Vanley Burke



Vanley's grand-mother, in Hatfield Road, Handsworth
© Vanley Burke [MS2192]

Vanley Burke is a leading documentary photographer. He began taking photographs of the African-Caribbean community in Handsworth in the 1960s, covering their establishment as a community through business, churches, activism, education schemes and recreation. His work also documents the daily life of other communities, locally and internationally, both through photographs and other material he has collected.

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George Hallett



On the streets in Handsworth © George Hallett, 1971 [MS2249]

Photographs of Handsworth taken in 1971 by internationally renowned South African photographer George Hallett, then living in exile in London, to illustrate a Times Literary Supplement entitled 'Handsworth: Caribbean Black Country'. The article dealt with many issues highlighted in the Runnymede Trust's report 'Race in the Inner City'. Hallett has now returned to South Africa and recently photographed the Truth and Reconciliation process.

Papers of the Indian Workers Association



Photograph of a protest march, from the IWA archive [MS2141]

Correspondence, newscuttings and other papers, from 1961 onwards, of the national organisation and the Birmingham branch. Both groups were active in challenging racism locally and nationally, and campaigned against the immigration laws of the 1960s and 1970s. The Indian Workers Association was also involved in trade union struggles and Indian politics.

Charles Parker Archive

Over 4,500 sound recordings and a vast paper archive covering the life and work of the innovative broadcaster and political campaigner. Parker worked in Birmingham from 1954 to his death in 1980. He kept everything and everything he kept is in his archive. In addition to folk music and the oral tradition, the archive documents experiences of disability, of living in a travelling community, and the experiences of Black, Asian, Irish, Chinese and other communities. Parker was also instrumental in founding Banner Theatre.



Charles Parker [MS4000] conducting an interview, © Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger

Banner Theatre Archive

The vast archive of the campaigning socialist theatre company Banner Theatre illustrates how performance can be used as a political tool. Founded in 1974, Banner's productions campaign against inequality and racism and are based on individual stories recorded through photographs, sound and video, all of which is preserved in their archive.



Photograph taken during the Handsworth Community Project, © Banner Theatre [MS1611]

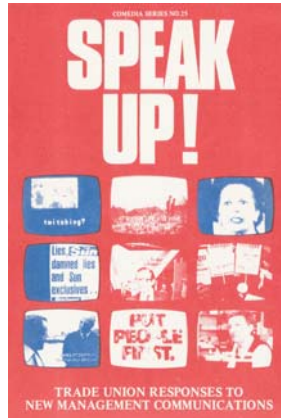
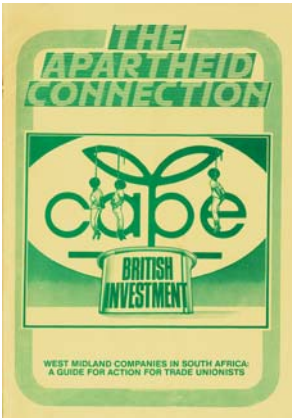
Ten:8



Smethwick Gurdwara, © John Reardon, 1982, 'Home Front' [MS2478]

Photographic work, community publications and newscuttings, c1970-2000. These are the papers of Derek Bishton, who worked alongside Brian Homer, John Reardon and other photographers, journalists and designers on photography projects in Birmingham, including: *Ten:8* photographic magazine; *Handsworth Self Portrait* series; *Home Front* exhibition and book; and publications for community groups campaigning for social justice.

Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre



TURC publications [MS2118 and MS2009]

The Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre [TURC] focused on issues associated with working life. This was widely defined and extended to employment and unemployment rights, issues of discrimination, privatisation, poverty, unionism, trade, health, environment, youth, sexuality, gender, international and cultural issues, and national and local government policies. The records show their diversity of concerns, campaigns and activities.

Other Collections



Conkers, © Terry Lo, 1993 [MS2512]

As well as the collections that are being catalogued, we will also feature other relevant material from the City Archives on the *Connecting Histories* website, including photographs by Pogus Caesar, Paul Hill, Terry Lo, Tim Smith, Sukhvinder Singh Ubhi and the Council of Sikh Gurdwaras.

Outreach Activities



Izzy Mohammed (Community Access Officer) with Clare Short, and behind the *Connecting Histories* stall at 'Celebrating Sanctuary'.

You may already have seen us at the *Adult Learners Fair* held in Victoria Square on 21st of May, or *Celebrating Sanctuary* on 17th and 18th of June.

**Watch out for *Connecting Histories* at:
Soho House - Mini Mela
Saturday 13 August 2005, from 12.00 to 3.30pm.**

We will be organising lots of events with community groups across the city. Please contact us if you would like to work with us on an event, or use this newsletter to publicise a project or event.

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